



Finishing the craft projects that loved ones leave behind.

When Dawn Tucker, an avid thrifter and textile crafter, visits her local secondhand shops in Flagstaff, Arizona, she looks for unfinished knitting projects. “I always wonder about them,” she says. “Did they give it up, or did they pass away? What happened that brought it to Savers?”

So when she heard a local radio segment about Loose Ends, an organization that matches unfinished crafting projects with “finishers” who complete them for their intended recipients, she immediately signed up.

Across Flagstaff, Rebekah Nordstrom heard the same segment on KNAU, the city’s public radio station. She was moved by the idea, and thought about an unfinished pair of mittens that a friend had given her to finish before the friend passed away. “It was Scandinavian knitting, which is notoriously challenging, and I just couldn’t finish it,” says Rebekah. When Loose Ends matched her with Dawn, who lives nearby, it felt like fate.

That’s exactly the type of connection that Jennifer Simonic and Masey Kaplan wanted to foster when they started Loose Ends in 2022. The longtime friends and devoted crafters had both finished projects from friends’ loved ones before. When a mutual friend asked if

either of them would crochet two blankets that her mom had started, they thought they’d see if a skilled crocheter could take them on. They put up flyers in their neighborhood craft stores, cafes, and senior centers in Seattle, Washington, and Portland, Maine, and posted in groups online. A month later, they had a list of 150 finishers across the country.

“I wasn’t surprised, because crafters love what they do,” says Jennifer. “We know what it’s like to lose somebody, and if something happened to us, we’d want our projects to be finished as well.”

Since then, Loose Ends has matched over 1,500 projects to finishers across the world in a range of textiles, including knitting, crochet, quilting, cross-stitching, hand-dyeing, and hairpin lace. With over 23,500 finishers at the time of writing, Jennifer and Masey are always looking for more requests, especially when they can match people who live near each other to foster community after loss.

Laurie Lalish had always knit for her daughter, Annie—mostly hats and scarves. A few years ago, in the midst of fighting Parkinson’s disease,

Laurie decided she wanted to knit her a sweater. The mother and daughter went to the fabric store together in Seattle, picking out a cropped mock turtleneck pattern and a thick mustard-yellow yarn. “She really wanted to knit it for me, as something she was trying to do to continue being the one who took care of me,” says Annie. “She kept mentioning it, even when she was past the point where I knew she wasn’t able to knit anymore.”

A few weeks after her mother passed away, Annie turned to Loose Ends. The organization immediately matched her with Joy Oliver, who lived nearby. “I was nervous to go up to a stranger’s house, when they knew what I had just gone through,” says Annie, who walked over with the started sweater and yarn the day after her mother’s memorial service.

Joy, who has knit for decades, felt Annie’s vulnerability and her mother’s tangible care as she worked on the sweater. “It felt like there was this added presence, because somebody else picked the yarn and color,” says Joy, who finished it while watching episodes of *Call the Midwife* over two cold, drizzly weeks.

In many ways, Loose Ends finishers act as translators, bringing the care and intention of a former knitter through to the beloved person for whom their gift was meant. While the finisher usually doesn’t meet the original crafter, they’re still there through every stitch. Inspired by another finisher in the Loose Ends Facebook group, Joy took an extra step to show that collaboration: in red yarn she traced a red heart over the last stitch that Annie’s mother ever made, visible in the middle of the sweater’s lower half.

“It’s something I’m going to cherish, and not just in a drawer,” says Annie, who puts on the sweater when the weather gets cold. “I wear it as much as I can.”

Loose Ends projects deliver a sense of connection: to the original knitters, who weren’t able to finish their projects; to the beloved recipients who miss them; and to the finishers, many of whom learned their craft from relatives and friends who have also passed away. “To help somebody get closure almost helps you get closure on things you weren’t able to,” says Joy, who treasures a baby bonnet that her mother knit before she got dementia. “It’s not a totally altruistic experience—I got something back, too.”

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Photo by Jackie Russo.